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BESHALAH

REVIVAL OF THE FORGOTTEN TALMUD

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For many, Talmud Yerushalmi is an unfamiliar and underappreciated text. Most do not know of the gems that lie underneath its surface. Like the treasures of an ancient shipwreck in the murky deep, Yerushalmi has sat unattended. Even with the advent of commentaries in the modern age, it has mostly remained a closed book, read by a select few.

But this reality is quickly changing. Recently, a student of mine asked me if the city of Lod appeared in Tanakh. I was familiar with a Gemara (*Bavli Megillah 4a*) that identifies Lod, Ono, and Gei Ha-Harashim as walled cities at the time of Joshua. Not recalling the exact location, I typed the words “Lod Ono” into Sefaria’s search engine. In addition to that source, the sixth search result from *Yerushalmi Megillah (1:1)* contained interesting information about Lod, so I encouraged my student to look into the passage.

I then realized that I was casually directing a high school student to learn Yerushalmi on her own, something that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. Moreover, Yerushalmi had entered

our Beit Midrash with the ease of a quick word search. Yerushalmi is no longer restricted to the select few able and interested enough to pursue it. Sefaria’s [new digital edition](#) of the late Dr. Heinrich Guggenheimer’s translation of Yerushalmi is a watershed moment in history. Now, Yerushalmi can and will have a place in the cultural conversation of the average member of the Beit Midrash. While it remains a difficult text even in translation, its newfound accessibility is unprecedented in history.

This article aims to introduce Yerushalmi to a wider audience. It focuses on two themes. Firstly, after a brief historical overview, I will establish the value of studying Yerushalmi. Not only does it contain unique traditions not preserved in Bavli, but it offers fruitful comparisons to parallel passages common to the two texts. Secondly, I will survey the larger reception history of Yerushalmi. The persistent obscurity of the text throughout Jewish intellectual history, even through the twentieth century, highlights the significance of today’s widespread accessibility.

Origins

Most commonly known as the Talmud Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud), the text is also known as *Talmud Eretz Yisrael* (Talmud of the Land of Israel), *Talmuda de-B’nei Ma’arava* (Talmud of the

Westerners), and the Palestinian Talmud (especially in academic circles).¹ Despite its name, the anonymous editors did not compose the text in Jerusalem, then a non-Jewish city known as Aelia Capitolina. Rather, the composition took place in the Galilee, primarily in Tiberias as well as other locations.²

Yerushalmi is the compilation of seven generations of Amoraic scholars over a roughly 200-year period from 225-425 CE. Some scholars have assumed an earlier date for the completion of Yerushalmi, around 375 CE; not long after the Gallus revolt of 351 and the earthquake in the Galilee twelve years later.³ R. Aharon Heiman, for instance, assumed that the Yeshivot of Eretz Yisrael were destroyed during the suppression of this revolt and that most of the Amoraim traveled to Bavel.⁴ However, Hillel Newman has pointed to evidence that Rabbi Mana, the most influential Amora of the fifth generation, remained active into the 380s.⁵ *Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 3:5* records that Rabbi Mana instructed the bakers of Sepphoris to bake bread when a certain *Proqla* arrived. Newman identifies this

¹ [Rav Nissim Gaon](#) first employed the term *Talmuda de-B'nei Ma'arava*, while the *Geonim* often used the term *Talmud Eretz Yisrael*.

² See Moshe Pinchuk's useful introduction, [Mevo Le-Limud Ha-Talmud Ha-Yerushalmi](#) (Machon Doresh Tzion, 2003), 26-27.

³ Yaacov Sussman is of this opinion. See [here](#), p. 132, n. 187.

⁴ *Toldot Tannaim Ve-Amoraim*, s.v. Rabbi Mana II, [p. 888](#). Heiman connected these events with the words of [Sherira Gaon](#) that many students came to Babylonia during the time of Abaye and Rava, the latter of whom died in 352, due to persecution in Palestine.

⁵ Hillel Newman, "[Early Halakhic Literature within Jews in Byzantium](#)," 629-630.

Proqla with Proculus, a prefect of Constantinople, who governed Palestine in c. 380. Also, Gamliel VI was demoted from his position of Nasi in 415, and Theodosius had already abolished the institution by 429.⁶ It is likely that the compilation of Yerushalmi was completed sometime around then, whether or not the ending of the Patriarchate directly contributed to it.⁷

Unique Yerushalmi Traditions

Comparing Yerushalmi to its more famous counterpart, the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), the most obvious difference concerns what sections of the Mishnah each focuses on. Yerushalmi comments on all of the order of *Zera'im*, while Bavli, composed outside of Israel where the issues of *Zera'im* are less practical, only comments on *Berakhot*. The reverse is true for *Seder Kodashim*, for which only Bavli exists. Yerushalmi also comments on Tractate *Shekalim* of *Seder Moed*, which Bavli skips.⁸ Additionally, there is no gemara in our versions of Yerushalmi on the last four chapters of *Shabbat*, the last chapter of *Makkot*, and the last six and a half chapters of *Niddah*. Yerushalmi probably had commentary on these chapters at one point, but they were likely

⁶ See [here](#), items 23 and 32.

⁷ Moshe Assis explicitly links the two events (*Encyclopedia Ha-Ivrit* Vol. 32 [1987], s.v. "Talmud Yerushalmi" [p. 896]), but Newman disagrees (op. cit.). Y.N. Epstein suggests the completion occurred around approximately 409-419 CE (*Mevo'ot Le-Sifrut Ha-Amoraim*, Vol. 3, p. 274), compatible with Newman's findings.

⁸ The first printed edition of the Babylonian Talmud included Yerushalmi *Shekalim*, which has its own interesting textual and reception history. See [here](#) for more on this phenomenon.

lost before the Middle Ages.⁹ Thus, Yerushalmi offers the unique opportunity to study an additional eleven tractates of Gemara on *Zera'im* and *Shekalim*.

Moreover, Yerushalmi preserves hundreds of Tannaitic and Amoraic traditions absent in Bavli. Bavli contains many more statements from the first four generations of Eretz Yisrael Amoraim, but much less material from the fifth generation and onward. For example, while *Bavli Ta'anit* (23b) relates several stories about the above-mentioned Rabbi Mana (or Mani in Bavli), it barely discusses his halakhic opinions; in Yerushalmi, on the other hand, he appears regularly throughout. In Bavli, Rabbi Mani's father Rabbi Yonah, and the latter's contemporary Rabbi Yose bar Zavda, the leaders of the Amoraim of the fourth generation in Eretz Yisrael, appear only occasionally. But in Yerushalmi, Rabbi Yonah dominates halakhic discussions, especially in *Seder Zera'im*, and Rabbi Yose appears numerous times.¹⁰ Somewhat surprisingly, this phenomenon occurs even for Babylonian Amoraim. Y. Florsheim has noted a number of opinions of the Babylonian Amora Rav Hisda that only appear in Yerushalmi.¹¹ Amoraim who appear only in Yerushalmi are no less valuable

⁹ On this issue, see Yaacov Sussman's "[Pirkei Yerushalmi](#)."

¹⁰ In the words of Zacharias Frankel, Rabbi Yonah "is the the first to speak on every topic (*rosh ha-medabrim be-khol makom*)" and Rabbi Yose appears "an innumerable amount of times (*mekomot ein mispar*)" (*Mevo Le-Yerushalmi*, pp. 98a, 100a).

¹¹ Y. Florsheim, "*Le-Toldot Hayyav shel Rav Hisda*," *Sinai* 71 (1972): 121-131. Some of this phenomenon, as Florsheim notes, is due to the wealth of statements uniquely preserved by Rav Hisda's student Rabbi Zeira, who moved to the Land of Israel from Babylonia.

than Bavli opinions we do not follow in halakhic practice.

Comparing Bavli and Yerushalmi

The above remarks concern traditions not shared by the two corpora. But the numerous traditions common to both Talmuds present a rich opportunity for direct comparison. As Ritva wrote, "We always rely on their Talmud (i.e. Yerushalmi) and interpret and codify our Talmud (the Bavli) based on their (the scholars of Yerushalmi) words."¹²

For example, *Bavli Shabbat 17a* obliquely relates that during the debates over the eighteen decrees between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, a sword was struck in the Beit Midrash. *Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:4*, however, preserves the astonishing testimony that students from Beit Shammai murdered members of Beit Hillel!¹³ Another fascinating example concerns *yibbum* (Levirate marriage). *Bavli Yevamot 39b* relates the opinion of Abba Shaul that performing *yibbum* for impure motives is akin to *ervah* (forbidden relations). Accordingly, without the proper intentions, *halitzah* (dissolution of the Levirate bond) is preferable. Fascinatingly, *Yerushalmi Yevamot 1:1* notes that the Tanna R' Yose adhered to the opinion of Abba Shaul; he had intercourse with his *yevamah* (late brother's wife) through a sheet, implying that reducing pleasure facilitates more pure intentions for the act. These examples deepen our understanding of Bavli traditions.

¹² Responsa no. 108, Mossad HaRav Kook ed.

¹³ Mordechai Margaliyot (*Hilkhos Eretz Yisrael Me-HaGenizah*, p. 142) published a Cairo Genizah fragment (T-S NS 235.10) that lists the fourth of Adar as a fast day commemorating the loss of life from this fight.

Beyond these two curious examples, one may consult the groundbreaking works of Rabbi Ahikam Kashat: *Amrei Be-Ma'arava* and *Darkhei Ha-Talmudim*. The former lists thousands of individual differences between Bavli and Yerushalmi, organized by tractate. The latter systematically analyzes, over the course of more than five hundred pages, 121 fundamental differences between the two Talmuds. *Amrei Be-Ma'arava* is an excellent work for a student of Bavli who wants to see novel points in Yerushalmi on any *sugya*. The same work also has helpful [indices](#) that list, in Kashat's opinion, the major novellae of Yerushalmi in both Halakhah and Aggadah (numbering, respectively, 105 and 158). Additionally, it contains an index of 105 points of normative Halakhah derived from Yerushalmi. Thus, to properly understand Bavli, as well as many of our religious traditions, we must also study Yerushalmi. Thankfully, doing so is now easier than ever before.

Yerushalmi in the Middle Ages

We know very little about what happened to Yerushalmi for the first 500 years after its completion. Unlike the Babylonian Talmud, about which we have the rich letter of Rav Sherira Gaon (987), we have barely any information about the nature of learning in the land of Israel in late antiquity. The oldest extant piece of Yerushalmi is a seventh-century synagogue mosaic in Rehob, near Beit She'an. The document contains the *Beraita de-Tehumin*, the list of the borders of the land of Israel found in *Yerushalmi Shevi'it* (6:1), and a selection from *Yerushalmi Demai* (2:1). It indicates that some communities used Yerushalmi as a source of Halakhah in this period.¹⁴

¹⁴ This mosaic, discovered in 1973, is also the oldest known physical copy of a text of rabbinic literature. For more

Another cryptic source appears in *Seder Olam Zutta* (end of [chapter 10](#)), which recounts that Mar Zutra fled Babylonia in 520 and became *Reish Pirka* (a head of yeshiva). It then provides a list of his successors up to 804.¹⁵ Did Mar Zutra and the following *Reishei Pirka* study Bavli, Yerushalmi, or both? We simply do not know. In around 800, Pirqoi Ben Baboy wrote that scholars from Eretz Yisrael had traveled to the West with parts of Talmud in *Seder Nashim*, implicitly of Yerushalmi.¹⁶ Interestingly, several Karaite sources indicate that some form of a commentary and/or abridgement of Yerushalmi existed.¹⁷

information on the mosaic see [this article](#) (in English) and this more thorough [article](#) (in Hebrew) by Yaacov Sussman.

¹⁵ This date appears explicitly in some manuscripts, but not in the version on Sefaria.

¹⁶ Genizah fragment L-G Talm. 1-20; this is the correct reading of the fragment, and not *genuzin*, hidden, in place of *Nashim* (to access Genizah documents cited in this essay, readers may create a free account [here](#)).

¹⁷ Salman ben Yeroham, a ninth-century Karaite, in his commentary on Psalms 140:6, criticized Saadia Gaon for denying that bloodshed occurred between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, stating that he sent the Yerushalmi noted above ([Shabbat 1:4](#)) with the commentary of Yaakov ben Ephraim al-Shami to Iraq to publicize Saadia's "cover-up". It is possible to read Salman's comments as referring to a (at least partial) commentary on Yerushalmi, which would be the earliest known example. For more about Yaakov ben Ephraim al-Shami, see the addendum [here](#), which also contains a transcript and translation of Salman's comments. Also, Lieberman ([here](#), p. 2) quotes eleventh-century Karaite scholar Yeshua ben Yehudah's testimony that he saw an abridged version of Bavli and Yerushalmi. Lieberman believes this is a reference to *Sefer Metivot*, a lost work from the Gaonic period, quoted primarily by Yitzhak ben Abba Mari (author of *Sefer Ha-Ittur*).

The information in later periods is not much clearer. Even from the beginning of the eleventh century, when records from the Genizah exist, we do not know how exactly the scholars of Eretz Yisrael valued Yerushalmi. It is clear by that point that they had already adopted Bavli as authoritative alongside Yerushalmi. We even know that Yahya, the son of the Gaon of Jerusalem Shlomo ben Yehudah (d. 1051), learned *Halakhot Gedolot* under Rav Hayya Gaon in Baghdad.¹⁸ Yerushalmi was certainly available; fragments of Yerushalmi dated to circa 900 have survived from the Genizah. However, we do not know whether the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael would have decided the Halakhah in favor of Yerushalmi over the Bavli.¹⁹

A Genizah fragment of the beginning of *Bavli Berakhot* (L.G. Misc. .36) provides an interesting clue. This copy belonged to children of a member of *Haburat Eretz Ha-Tzvi*, the senior Palestinian Rabbinic committee composed of seven scholars. The scribe lists the title of the book as *Berakhot Talmud Shel Anshei Mizrah*, “*Berakhot* [of the] Talmud of the People of the East” (i.e. Babylonia), which echoes the similar appellation for Yerushalmi *Talmuda de-B’nei Ma’arava* (often contrasted with *Talmud Didan*, “our Talmud,” for Bavli). The scribe’s usage of the term *Shel Anshei Mizrah* implies that he did not see Bavli as his *own* Talmud, but rather Yerushalmi.

Concerning the *Geonim* of Bavel, Robert Brody concluded that the Yerushalmi was either unknown or ignored before the period of Saadia

¹⁸ See Moshe Gil, [A History of Palestine, 634-1099](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 528.

¹⁹ For an overview of the Torah of Eretz Yisrael after the completion of Yerushalmi, see [here](#).

Gaon, who was active in the first quarter of the tenth century.²⁰ After Saadia Gaon, usage of Yerushalmi increased, especially in the writings of Sherira Gaon and his son Hayya Gaon. Even so, one could read through the entire letter of Rav Sherira Gaon about the history of Torah learning and not realize that Yerushalmi even existed!²¹ In a similar vein, Hayya Gaon explicitly declared that Halakhah should follow Bavli over Yerushalmi.²²

The next extensive use of Yerushalmi appears in the writings of Rabbeinu Hananel and Rav Nissim Gaon, both active in the first half of the eleventh century in Qayrawan, Tunisia. They quote Yerushalmi hundreds of times in their commentaries on Bavli. It is not clear why specifically at that time Yerushalmi gained popularity, as Yerushalmi was seemingly not well known in Qayrawan before then.²³ Some have conjectured that Rav Hushiel, the father of Rabbeinu Hananel, may have brought the Yerushalmi to Qayrawan.²⁴

Yerushalmi’s further spread occurred gradually. For example, Rashi seemingly did not have access to a full copy of Yerushalmi, while Rabbeinu Tam

²⁰ *Teshuvot Rav Natronai ben Hilai Gaon*, p. 73 n. 30.

²¹ Sussman emphasizes this point. See “[Before and After the Leiden Manuscript of the Talmud Yerushalmi](#),” p. 204.

²² *Otzar Ha-Geonim, Pesahim*, no. 39.

²³ See Sussman emphasizes this point. See “[Before and After the Leiden Manuscript of the Talmud Yerushalmi](#),” p. 204.

²⁴ Rav Hushiel came from Italy, an area within the sphere of influence of the Eretz Yisrael Yeshiva, and he was the teacher of Rav Natan, *Av Beit Din* of that Yeshiva. See M. Gil, [Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages](#) (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 177-180.

had at least a copy of Yerushalmi *Zera'im* and *Moed* in his library.²⁵ Even the *Rishonim* most interested in Yerushalmi struggled to find copies of it.²⁶ Ri could only look up something in *Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah* after gaining access to a copy,²⁷ Ra'avyah wrote that he does not have access to Yerushalmi *Kilayim*,²⁸ and [Ra'avad](#) lamented that the Yerushalmi we possess was not properly edited.²⁹ About 100 years later, [Rashba](#) attributes the gross errors in Yerushalmi to the lack of study; only one in a generation masters it (*omeid alav*). The above comments came from *Rishonim* who quoted Yerushalmi extensively and studied it regularly. So many others had no interest in or awareness of Yerushalmi.

In contrast, among the *Rishonim* who did study Yerushalmi extensively was Rabbi Shimshon of Shantz (Sens), who used Yerushalmi throughout his commentary on *Mishnah*. Rambam, who based many rulings in *Mishneh Torah* on Yerushalmi, wrote that he had plans to write a summary of the practical *halakhot* derived from Yerushalmi, like Rif did for Bavli. It seems he eventually abandoned this project, but some of this work in Rambam's

²⁵ See Rami Reiner, "[The Yerushalmi in Rabbeinu Tam's Library](#)," who provides a good summary of the scholarship and discusses Rabbeinu Tam's attitude towards Yerushalmi.

²⁶ See Sussman "[Before and After the Leiden Manuscript of the Talmud Yerushalmi](#)," ; further quotes from *Rishonim* are from there.

²⁷ *Responsa Rah Or Zarua*, no. 174.

²⁸ *Responsa*, no. 1006.

²⁹ Interestingly, Ra'avad cites this reality as a reason why Maimonides should not have based his rulings so regularly on Yerushalmi.

handwriting survived in the Genizah.³⁰

Additionally, a student of Ra'avad, Rav Yitzhak Cohen, wrote a commentary on most of the three orders of *Moed*, *Nashim*, and *Nezikin*.³¹ Rabbi Yehudah ben Yakar, the teacher of Ramban, also apparently authored a commentary on Yerushalmi.³² Unfortunately, neither of these texts have survived. Unlike the rest of Yerushalmi, several medieval commentaries on Tractate *Shekalim* have survived.³³ For the most part, Yerushalmi remained obscure throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. I would estimate that at any given time during the Middle Ages, no more than about 100 people studied Yerushalmi regularly.

Early Modern Yerushalmi

The advent of the printing press did not totally alter Yerushalmi's obscurity. The first printing of Yerushalmi occurred in Venice in 1523. By the time of the second printing in Cracow in 1609, the publisher [noted](#) that "only one in a city and two from a family" (Jeremiah 3:14) have a copy of Yerushalmi. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, complaints of scarcity continued.³⁴

³⁰ R. Dr. Saul Lieberman published the original version as *Hilkhot Yerushalmi Le-Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon* (on *Berakhot* and *Ketubot*). R. Yehuda Zvi Stampfer recently published the nearly complete text for tractate *Ketubot*. An [introduction](#) and the [text](#) are available online.

³¹ Meiri, [Introduction to Avot](#).

³² See Rashba, *Responsa*, 1:523.

³³ Including the commentary of Rivevan printed in the Vilna ed. and two other commentaries available [here](#).

³⁴ See sources collected by Sussman in "[Before and After the Leiden Manuscript of the Talmud Yerushalmi](#)," p. 205.

Even those who could obtain a copy of Yerushalmi faced the daunting task of learning this difficult text without a commentary. Rabbi Shlomo Sirilio (1485-1554) sought to rectify this situation by authoring a commentary on *Zera'im* and tractate *Shekalim*, though he did not succeed in printing his work (it was later published, beginning with *Shekalim* in 1875). The same occurred for other contemporaries, such as Rabbi Elazar Azkiri (1553-1600, author of *Sefer Hareidim*), whose commentaries on Yerushalmi *Berakhot* and *Beitzah* were only published in the twentieth century. R. Yehoshua Beneviste (1590-1665) wrote a commentary called *Sadeh Yehoshua* on eighteen tractates of Yerushalmi, but only the commentary on four tractates of *Zera'im* was published in his lifetime; the others waited until 1749. The 1609 Cracow edition of Yerushalmi contains the exceptionally brief commentary of R. David Darshan, fittingly known as *Perush ha-Katzar* (“the short commentary”) which is not a line-by-line elucidation.

Over the first half of the eighteenth century, the commentary of R. Eliyahu of Fulda (c. 1650-c. 1720) to *Zera'im*, *Shekalim*, and the three *Bavas*, was published piecemeal. After his death, his project was continued by R. David Fraenkel (c. 1704-1762), who died having nearly finished and published a commentary named *Korban Ha-Eidah* on the remaining sections of Yerushalmi (his commentary is missing for the end of *Seder Nezikin* and tractate *Niddah*). At the same time, R. Moshe Margolis (1710-1781) accomplished the feat of writing the first complete commentary, *Pnei Moshe*.³⁵ However, only half of his commentary

³⁵ An interesting historical tidbit is that R. Margolis most likely enrolled in the University of Frankfurt as a botany student at the age of 69. See a discussion [here](#).

appeared during his lifetime; it was first fully printed in the Zhitomir edition of the Talmud (1860-1867), alongside *Korban Ha-Eidah*. Thus, before 1867, no one had access to a full commentary of Yerushalmi in one edition.³⁶ The barriers to entry remained enormous.

Modern Yerushalmi Studies

The first academic work devoted to Yerushalmi was *Mevo Le-Yerushalmi* (1870) by R. Zacharias Frankel. Despite the passage of time, his work remains important. In 1909, Professor Louis Ginzberg published *Seridei Yerushalmi*, a large collection of Genizah fragments of Yerushalmi and variant readings from the Vatican manuscript of *Zera'im* and *Sotah*. Concurrently, Ber Ratner of Vilna published *Ahavat Zion Ve-Yerushalayim*, collecting the quotes of Yerushalmi found in *Rishonim*. Ratner died in 1917 in the middle of his work. Several scholars, most recently Yaakov Sussman and Moshe Pinchuk, have continued his project, and the latter maintains an [online database](#) of all the references. Ginzberg also published a three volume commentary on *Yerushalmi Berakhot* with a scholarly introduction. Yaakov Nahum Epstein, the father of modern academic Talmud studies, wrote important articles and introductions to Yerushalmi.³⁷ His student Saul Lieberman wrote

³⁶ The commentary of *Pnei Moshe* on *Nezikin*, which filled in the gaps of *Korban Ha-Eidah*, was first published in Livorno in 1770. This is the first date that anyone could have theoretically owned a commentary on all of Yerushalmi. As an aside, Noda Be-Yehudah's copy of this commentary was recently [auctioned](#) for \$15,000.

³⁷ Interestingly, in a letter, Saul Lieberman defended Epstein against criticism from his cousin Hazon Ish. Lieberman stated that Epstein's methods helped him understand many obscure passages in Yerushalmi. See *Genazim u-She'elot u-Teshuvot Hazon Ish*, pp. 207-209 (referenced [here](#)).

several groundbreaking articles as well as a commentary on a number of tractates.³⁸

In the twenty-first century, the Academy of Hebrew Language published an academic edition of Yerushalmi based on the Leiden manuscript (the only complete manuscript of Yerushalmi) and all other manuscripts, under the direction of Yaacov Sussman and Binyamin Elizur.³⁹ Also noteworthy is Professor Leib Moscovitz's [Terminology of Yerushalmi](#), which systematically discusses hundreds of phrases of Yerushalmi.

Beyond studies specific to Yerushalmi, the comparative analysis of Bavli and Yerushalmi is the bread and butter of academic Talmud studies. Without Yerushalmi, it would be much more difficult to untangle the complex layers of transmission and editing found in Bavli. It is axiomatic that any academic study of Bavli must include relevant analysis of Yerushalmi.⁴⁰

Popular Interest

Within recent history, the first large-scale study initiative of Yerushalmi began with the creation of the Daf Yomi Yerushalmi by the fifth Rebbe of Ger in 1980. Several easy-to-use commentaries written

³⁸ *Yerushalmi Ke-Peshuto on Shabbat, Erubin, and Pesachim* and a short commentary on *Bava Kamma, Bava Metziah, and Bava Batra* based on the Escorial manuscript.

³⁹ The Leiden manuscript was copied in 1289 in Italy by Yehiel Anav. The first volume of the edition is based on this manuscript while the second volume includes all the fragments from the Cairo Genizah (corresponding to approximately twenty five percent of Yerushalmi) as well as all the fragments from the so-called "European Genizah," fragments found in the bindings of books throughout Europe.

⁴⁰ For more information about the academic study of Yerushalmi, see [this bibliography](#).

by Ger Chassidim have since appeared on the market.⁴¹ Artscroll's publication of Yerushalmi, [begun in 2005](#) and one tractate away from completion, has also increased public interest and accessibility.⁴² In Israel, Machon Orot Ha-Yerushalmi, run by Rabbi Avraham Blass, is devoted to promoting Yerushalmi amongst the public. The organization is producing its own commentary on Yerushalmi, *Or La-Yesharim*, authored by Rabbi Yehoshua Buch.

The Internet has provided new opportunities for the study of Yerushalmi. Shiurim on the entire Yerushalmi in multiple languages are available on YUTorah and Kol Ha-Lashon.⁴³ Prof. Guggenheimer's commentary was originally made public by his publisher, DeGruyter, on their website in a PDF version. ALHATORAH and Sefaria have now both integrated this commentary into their respective databases, allowing for full search of Yerushalmi. Significantly, Guggenheimer's text is based on the Leiden manuscript, infinitely superior to the standard 1922 Vilna edition.⁴⁴ Sefaria has also added the French translation of Moïse Schwab and links to images of the Leiden manuscript and the first

⁴¹ I personally prefer the *Lev Yerushalayim* commentary.

⁴² Jacob Neusner [also translated](#) Yerushalmi into English, but unlike Artscroll, his version does not contain an extensive commentary.

⁴³ The latter includes the entire Yerushalmi explained by [Rav Chaim Kanievski](#). These lectures are the basis for the ongoing edition of his commentary on Yerushalmi. Additionally, the [Daf Yomi Advancement Forum](#) and [yerushalmionline.org](#) also contain helpful material for the study of Yerushalmi.

⁴⁴ The Vilna edition is ultimately derived from the Leiden manuscript, but it has all the errors that have crept in over six hundred years.

printed edition. Sefaria's user-friendly interface—which includes intertextual connections—as well as its handy source sheet creator will facilitate the inclusion of Yerushalmi in many future lectures and classrooms.

The Internet has [democratized learning](#), removing so many barriers to entry for the layperson. Astonishingly, we are witnessing the opening up of a text that was for most of its history not easily accessible, even for the scholarly elite. Yerushalmi has now transformed from a text marginalized by the *Geonim* to one learned by thousands, from a text difficult to obtain to one easily at our fingertips. In so many ways, it is remarkable that we did not lose Yerushalmi over the past 1600 years. I look forward to a great future as the wider world begins to learn and appreciate the light of Yerushalmi.

WHAT'S MISSING IN "THE VIEW FROM PEW"

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A recent article in [Jewish Action](#) surveyed responses from a selection of Jewish educators and communal leaders to the [Pew survey on Jewish Americans](#), indicating that 33% of those raised as Orthodox Jews no longer identify as Orthodox. While the article points out that there have been criticisms of the survey's methodology, it rightly calls our attention to something Modern Orthodox Jewish educators and communal professionals have anecdotally lamented for some time. The responses in *Jewish Action* call for, among other things, a greater emphasis on spirituality and connectedness in Jewish education, addressing perceived institutional and communal hypocrisies,

and the need for greater parental engagement in Jewish learning and practice at home.

These responses resonate with me and derive from the participants' deep knowledge and experience. But it seemed to me that there was one perspective left out: the role that the traditional Jewish high school education plays in allowing for a disconnection that many young people feel between their learning and lives as religiously devoted individuals and their learning and lives as secular citizens.

Before explaining why this disconnect occurs, let's begin with three essential services the Orthodox Jewish Day School movement provides:

1. It provides a reliable social bubble. Most of a child's socialization occurs within a community that broadly shares a set of core values, especially around family formation, relationship to Israel, and communal life.
2. It fosters the development of Jewish individuals who by most historical standards are quite knowledgeable of Jewish texts, halakhic foundations, and religious practice.
3. It provides the first two services while also providing a general education that, with some community-based differences, allows young people access to the knowledge and skills necessary to be active and engaged citizens in broader society.

But beyond this basic framework, Jewish education has struggled to foster reliable strategy, at scale, that can help young people integrate the widely divergent values and worldviews underlying their Jewish and general learning. Our graduates may

know a lot about the intellectual legacies of Jerusalem and Athens, but they broadly lack a framework for living between these worlds in full view of the conflicts and trade-offs that entails. Many young people seem to think that the traditional “dual curriculum” is nothing more than two schools placed under one roof, where the burden of long days, extra work, and conflicting ideas is something to be managed, not integrated.

Recognizing this concern, many school administrators have carved out programs and positions focusing on interdisciplinary learning that attempt to explore and model an integrated worldview. But these efforts seldom penetrate the walls of individual classrooms, and students understand very well that the classroom is the most important part of their time in school. At best, we have left it to our young people to reach out independently to take advantage of interdisciplinary opportunities; at worst, we have sent them down two parallel tracks with a strong likelihood that their Jewish learning fades away or becomes secondary in the face of the practical and demanding needs of career and livelihood. Leaving aside assimilation for a moment, how many Modern Orthodox adults do we know who pursue regular and ongoing growth in their Jewish learning?

To my mind, this failure to integrate is rooted in three causes, and each of these areas presents us with constructive opportunities for change. First, the structure of traditional school makes it very difficult to break away from classes that are “subject silos,” where specific teachers are required for each class and a single numerical mark determines a student’s success in each subject. If, for example, we wanted to integrate Tanakh learning with studies

in English literature, we would need to reimagine curricular structures, success criteria, and skill-based evaluations. We would also need the ability to build a structured conversation that supports the conflicts created when a classical liberal arts pursuit, underpinned by secular values and western ideals, confronts Torah learning, underpinned by biblical values and prophetic ideals.

I have written [elsewhere in these pages](#) about different ideas for reimagining the traditional structure of Jewish high school and the benefits it could provide educationally and economically. I argue that it should come as no surprise that the 150-year-old model of traditional school is not most conducive to addressing the current complexities of living and thinking between two worldviews. We would be wise to rethink the role of teachers as “presenters of knowledge” and instead consider them “coaches of learning” who empower students on unique paths of learning and exploration. Teachers should curate and create digital learning resources to more effectively differentiate lessons based on individual learning needs and to focus on developing self-aware and independent learners.

A coach is different from an instructor. An instructor is focused on a subject and how to best explain that subject so that the largest possible percentage of students can master the subject. The instructor looks at grade distributions and averages, and improves outcomes on the margins. A coach is focused on the individual learner and how to best facilitate learning in a subject based on his needs. A coach knows the subject but is not herself the primary expositor of its content. She is a developer of different explanations, methodologies, and ideas that suit different learners. The coach

looks at assessments as individual markers of learning on a path toward mastery, measuring and improving outcomes at whatever pace and depth suits the learner's needs. Coming back to the subject at hand, a teacher as coach does not accept an outcome where the learner is succeeding in general studies at the expense of Jewish learning because the coach is concerned with the development of the whole learner and his ability to holistically master all the learning challenges life presents.

A second cause of our struggles to better integrate Jewish high school learning is rooted in how we hire teachers. While it is certainly not always the case, often—and especially outside the NY metropolitan area—Modern Orthodox schools draw from a pool of Judaic studies teachers with a worldview significantly to the right of the school's feeder community. These teachers often see their role as rooted in *kiruv*—drawing students toward a more bifurcated and less integrated Jewish worldview. General studies teachers are likewise often drawn from a pool of professionals with entirely secular values and approaches to their teaching.

A serious effort toward integrating Jewish and general learning would benefit greatly from an effort to recruit, train, and compensate teachers who themselves embody a deeply integrated worldview. It is often said that the best education is accomplished by modeling more than talking. Yet how many Modern Orthodox schools have a faculty where the majority of teachers embody the worldview the school seeks to develop in its students?

Finally, efforts toward integration are hampered by the implied desire for Jewish high schools to be both classical preparatory schools, with an impressive number of admissions to elite universities, as well as community schools serving the communal need for Jewish knowledge and continuity. It might be nice to challenge young people to grapple with the conflicts that animate living a committed religious life with an engaged secular worldview, but not if that is going to make it more difficult for *my* child to get the grades she needs for university. Some might say it's better to just do what other preparatory schools do and focus on the core curriculum with separate Judaic and general studies transcripts so these worlds don't get too "unnecessarily" mixed.

It seems wise to abandon this shortsighted thinking. Working to develop young people who make the active and ongoing choice to advance a life of integrated Jewish and general learning would seem to be a goal that is especially critical to the experience of leaving the bubble of Jewish community for full immersion in a secular university. Focusing too much on the point of admissions while overlooking the tools needed to thrive once on campus seems myopic and lacking the lifelong view needed to confront the challenges of assimilation. As for communities, we would need to make a choice to value the meaningful implementation of what we already value in structure. Or, to put it differently, to commit to making Modern Orthodox education something that is in function more than just a building with a science lab and a *beit midrash*.

Taking nothing away from the benefits of cultivating spirituality, improving our parenting skills, and mitigating our internal hypocrisies, it is

time to fundamentally rethink how we do Jewish high school education for the sake of creating a more dynamic model that can better meet the challenge of living as a modern Jew. There is no reason we need to remain wedded to an educational model that is structured largely the same way it was for our parents while we live in a time that presents challenges we could have barely imagined when we were in high school. Experimenting with fundamental changes to our current structures of learning will serve to develop greater self-awareness and reflection among our young people. And that can only enhance and expand upon the quality remedies already suggested by others.

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